THE
NEW YORK LEDGER
DEVOTED TO CHOICE LITERATURE ROMANCE THE NEWS COMMERCE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1872.

HOW IT ENDED.

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"Mother, Mr. Stearns says you can't have anything more, until you've paid what you owe now—four dollars and ninety-four cents. See, he put it down for me to show you," said a bright looking lad of about nine years, as he entered his mother's room; and dropping the empty basket, sank on a stool, looking with a disappointed face up into hers.

"I did not think it was so much. I would not have sent to ask for further credit if I had. I know he never likes the amount to go over five dollars. Saturday night, when I am paid, I always pay Mr. Stearns. I suppose he is worried because I was not up to time. But you know how sick I was," answered the boy's mother, turning to a woman who sat beside her, busily engaged sewing buttons on a shirt.

"Well, I'd just write him a line, and tell how it was, if I was you," said her companion.

"Yes, yes, you are right. I will. But I will not ask him for credit again until I pay him. I'd be sorry to have him think I was not as good as my word. And I'm sorry I can't give you a nice cup of tea and some toast, as I intended to. But—"

She was interrupted by her friend, saying:

"It is all for the best, may be. Oh, of course it is. No doubt about it. 'Everything happens for the best,' was one of the first things my poor mother used to try and impress on her children. Now don't think any more about it on my account. I had a right good breakfast before I left home. Now send Willie off with the line to Mr. Stearns, and then we will finish these shirts in a little time."

Mrs. Grey found it quite difficult to get together the necessary articles for writing the explanatory note. At length, with a sheet cut from Willie's copy-book, and the ink borrowed from her next door neighbor, she pushed off from the table the pile of shirts, and sat down. It took her a long time first to frame in her mind the words she thought the best, and quite as long to write them down. During that time Willie's mind was very much exercised. Too well he knew no one had breakfasted in his home that morning. Not for himself he cared; but for mother and sister Nellie his heart was troubled.

"Oh! why can't I think of some way to make enough money to buy some tea and toast?" he kept saying to himself. And then he went to counting the cost. "Six cents will get a drawing of tea, I know. Then the sugar; four cents for that. Nobody will sell me quarter of a pound for less. Oh, if I only could buy it by the large—a whole pound—I'd get it for thirteen cents. Well, I can't help it; must buy as I can pay. What next? Bread, six cents; and butter, quarter of a pound again. Oh, dear, ten cents more! Oh, when I'm rich I will always buy on the large—a whole pound every time. Now, how much does all come to? Six and four, that's ten; and six, sixteen; and ten again, twenty-six cents. Yes, that's what the tea and toast will cost. But where can I raise so much money? I must; indeed, I must, somehow."

The boy's face told plainly how his young brain was working over the great difficulty, and trying to overcome it. Suddenly his brow cleared, the closed lips parted with a hopeful smile, and he jumped up, exclaiming:

"Hurry, mamma, dear. I have only three quarters of an hour to attend to business before school time."

"Yes, I've finished now. It is so long since I have written a note, it is more difficult than it used to be. But, darling, you can't go without some breakfast," Mary Grey answered, handing the note to her boy.

Willie caught it from her, and sang out, in a cheery voice:

"No matter about breakfast for me. I'm all right. I'll be hungry in time for our dinner. A kiss is enough just now. Good-bye."

He caught his hat, snatched a hasty kiss, and was out of the door a moment after.

"What a blessed boy! Many would have gone off with a different face," said Mrs. Grey's friend.

"He is a great comfort. Oh, I've two cents. I must call him; he will be hungry, I know. I will tell him to buy two rolls as he passes the baker's."

Mrs. Grey, in her haste to call Willie back, swept from the little table the cover and everything on it. She was out on the door-step, and heard not the exclamation of alarm from the little woman, who snatched up the inkstand. When Mrs. Grey came in, a few minutes after, and caught sight of her friend's face, she cried out:

"What has happened? What ails you, Jane?"

Her companion held up two shirts, across the bosoms and sleeves of which most of the ink had fallen.

"Heaven help me!" cried Mary Grey. "Troubles never come singly. What shall I do now?"

Jane Andrews' lips parted. She looked toward her friend, who cried out:

"Don't, for pity's sake. I know what you want to say, Jane—what you always say, no matter what happens."

While the women stood bewailing the dreadful accident, little Nellie had caught the shirts from Mrs. Andrews and plunged them into a pail of water.

"Well, it *is* awful hard to see it sometimes; but still I believe it is all for the best," said

Jane, in a determined voice.

One would scarcely believe it possible for the mild, gentle eyes of Mary Grey to flash forth such a look of indignation. After which they filled with tears, as she cried:

"Best!—best that my children should go hungry—best that I shall be deprived of the means to keep them from starving! *You* know Mr. Dyson. Every one knows he is a hard man to work for. I know he will make me pay for those shirts, or discharge me; perhaps both."

Both women rubbed away diligently, and the dreadful spots faded slightly; but it was useless to hope to get them out that day. It would certainly require many hours of hot sun to entirely obliterate them.

"What shall I do? I was to have returned them Saturday. They are to be delivered at noon to-day—a special order," groaned Mary.

"Put your trust in the Lord, and go carry home the four. That's all you can do now," Jane Andrews said, and longed to conclude with her favorite maxim. But remembering Mary's look, she refrained.

Willie, after receiving the two cents, hurried along, neither stopping at the bakery nor Mr. Stearns'. On he went, many streets further, until he came to a pretty, neat looking cottage. Opening the gate, he rang the bell. It was soon answered by a pleasant, motherly looking woman, who asked:

"What is it, my little man?"

"Please, ma'am, I heard you offer Jim Barnes thirty-five cents to clear up your yard Saturday afternoon. I will do it for twenty-six, if—if—"

"Well, if what? Speak out. You are Willie Grey, aren't you?" asked the smiling woman.

"If you pay me now, and let me do it after school, I will be here ten minutes after school closes."

He looked with such an appealing expression up into her eyes, that although she said:

"Why, child, that would be a little risky, wouldn't it?" she looked kindly on him, and Willie felt he had much to hope for.

"No, ma'am. It is a safe bargain. I'll do it, if I live till this afternoon. If you will only give me twenty-six cents, I will be so thankful," he said, the appealing look deepening in his eyes.

"I will do it," the good woman said, and stopped Willie's thanks by asking, "How is it, when Jim wanted fifty cents, you are willing to take about half as much?"

"More than half, a little. Oh, Jim don't know the worth of money. He don't know how much twenty-six cents will buy. He don't know how to spend it right," Willie said, with a manly look. Closing his little hand over his prize, he bowed, smiled, and was about running off, when the little woman called out:

"Willie, I hope you will spend it rightly."

He turned. The eyes that were dancing, the face beaming, grew earnest, and so full of love, as he said softly:

"For mother, ma'am," and hastened away.

"God bless him!" she said, and was still standing on the door-step when a buggy stopped before it, and a gentleman jumped out. Coming up, he said:

"Mrs. Lovering, I feel rather uneasy about the children. The woman I have to take care of them has not much experience. Will you come with me and see what ails them, and if they need a physician ?"

"They need a mother's care, poor little dears! Certainly I will go, and be ready in two minutes," answered Mrs. Lovering, hurrying in.

Mr. Dyson waited outside, and pondered on Mrs. Lovering's words. He had been thinking just so himself several times lately, when he could spare the time from business to think of anything else.

True to her word, Mrs. Lovering was ready in the mentioned time.

Willie Grey was just coming out of Mr. Stearns' with his little bundles as they passed. He looked up, smiled and raised his hat.

"That 's the best boy I know," Mrs. Lovering said; and when Mr. Dyson asked:

"Who is he ?" she answered:

"Why, the widow Grey's son. She works for you."

Strange, yet so it was, that to both Mr. Dyson and Mrs. Lovering came the thought that the widow Grey would be a good mother for the motherless children.

Mrs. Lovering related the incident which occurred just before Mr. Dyson's arrival, and by that time they were before his door.

The little children Mrs. Lovering found really ill. The physician was summoned, and pronounced the malady, what the good woman feared—scarlet-fever.

Ten minutes of nine, Willie stood smiling before his mother. Seeing her troubled face, thrusting his parcels into her hands, he said, in a glad voice:

"It's all right. You will be stronger when you get a good cup of tea. It's my treat. All paid for. I must run, the bell is ringing. I will be late home; got to do some work for Mrs. Lovering. Good-bye."

Again he was off, with blessings following him.

Nellie prepared the tea and toast by the time her mother and Mrs. Andrews had finished the shirts.

Willie would have been sadly disappointed, could he have seen the grave faces that gathered round his treat. However, when she arose from the table, Mrs. Grey said:

"Willie was right, dear boy! I do feel stronger in mind, as well as body. Now I must get ready. Oh, mercy! I would sooner face a cannon's mouth than Mr. Dyson. I know he will be in an ill-humor before I get there; and when I do—"

The pale face grew paler with thoughts of the dreaded interview.

Just then they heard a vehicle of some kind stop in front of the house. Mrs. Grey, looking out of the window, exclaimed:

"Lord help me! It is Mr. Dyson."

An instant after a knock was heard on the door. Mary Grey, pale and trembling, opened it. As she raised her eyes appealingly to his, Mr. Dyson wondered he had never noticed how very pretty the little woman was before. He said:

"Mrs. Grey, I called to see about those shirts. I thought something must have happened to—" He stopped, noticing her agitation, and exclaimed:

"You are ill! Go in, madam. Don't be standing here." And taking her gently by the arm, he led her to the lounge, when she burst into tears, saying:

"Have pity! Oh, Mr. Dyson, I've spoiled two of the shirts!" Not daring to glance at him, she went on: "I know you will discharge me, of course, and make me pay for the shirts too. But, please, don't take it all at once! Pay me some, and let me work just till I pay for the others."

Finding he did not speak some dreadful harsh words, Mary raised her eyes timidly to his.

He was looking at her, not a shade of anger on his brow.

"Am I such a terrible man that I frighten poor women almost out of their senses?" he asked, a really pleasant smile on his face.

"Folks say you are dreadful hard," Mary answered, in a low voice.

"Humph! Well, perhaps I have been; but business is business, and I have little time for anything else. I'm not sorry you spoiled those shirts, for it has shown me what a timid, gentle little woman you are. You would not be unkind or hard on another woman's children. Now I have not the least idea of discharging you. On the contrary, I want to engage you permanently. Will you come and take care of my little children? They are sick, and need a kind, loving hand to tend them."

"Come! Certainly I will. Oh, thank you! How kind you are! I will get ready now," exclaimed Mary, starting up to go into the other room, when Mr. Dyson called:

"Stop a moment. There are some little arrangements to make, I guess. You'll have to close up here, and—and— Well, who do you prefer to do the business?"

Mary Grey turned and looked inquiringly into the smiling face. Mr. Dyson continued:

"What parson, I mean, to marry us?"

"Marry!" exclaimed Mary, sinking again on the lounge, her face crimsoning then.

"Yes, marry. Didn't I tell you a permanent engagement? How else can you be a mother to my little ones? Come, speak out! I'd no idea it would take so long. I don't want the time lost. You have known me six months. Do you like me any better, or not as well, on acquaintance?" asked Mr. Dyson.

"Better. Oh, yes. But—"

Mr. Dyson interrupted her:

"Never mind. Will you have me? We will settle everything as you wish afterward."

"But the children—mine? What about them?"

"I will be a father to yours, when you are mother to mine. And— Well, I will do the courting at odd times, when business is dull, and I have plenty of time. I know women like to be courted; so it well do as well after marriage, won't it? And then I'll not have given you the chance to throw at me, what so many men have to hear: 'All before marriage, and none after.' Now, say quick: Will you have me?"

Mary Grey looked into his eyes earnestly a moment, and then answered:

"Yes."

Mr. Dyson clasped her hand, and with an earnest:

"God bless you! May He deal with me as I do with you and yours. Now about the arrangements?" he asked.

"Suit yourself," Mary answered.

"Thank you. Then I will come to take you to your new home this afternoon, at six o'clock."

Mary opened her lips to utter a cry of remonstrance, but he shook his head and hurried out.

As the door closed after him Mary stepped back into the other room and stood before her friend. Jane had heard most of the conversation, and when Mary asked:

"What *do* you *think* of me?"

"I think in *future* you will let me say, 'Everything happens for the best,' because mother always said so; and now I know it for myself."

Willie finished his work for Mrs. Lovering; after which that kind woman went with him to his new home, where his noble qualities were fully appreciated. And he had never reason to doubt the truth of Jane Andrews' favorite maxim. And she, good woman, grew firmer than ever in her faith, when, a year after, she married the foreman of Mr. Dyson's ertablishment. Grateful for the blessings she enjoys, she is ever trying to instill her faith into all within her reach, by doing, in her humble way, the very best she can for them, both by words of comfort and deeds of kindness.